

See you Around by welshyak

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Summary:

After high school graduation, Steve leaves Hawkins to live in Chicago, where he can finally figure himself out without the distraction of seeing things that remind him of what has happened in the last two years.

One night, a blonde curly-haired stranger comes into the diner with a bruise and a split lip. Steve is immediately enraptured. How could he not be?

AU - Steve works in a diner and Billy likes going to that diner after things get to be too much at home.

Edit: Formatted differently for readability

1. Don't Quit Your Day job

Author's Note:

Hi this is my first fic for this pairing, I'm not sure where to go with it!! Leave any ideas you have in the comments, I'll incorporate them as I go along!

After Steve had graduated from Hawkins High, it was like his life was stretched, warped out of shape by the stress of graduating, and he didn't know what to do with himself.

He didn't get accepted to any colleges -- unlike Nancy, who had gotten accepted to every college she had applied for -- so it seemed to Steve that he would be working for his dad, and the idea made his stomach curl in disgust.

There was nothing less that he wanted in life than to work for his dad.

So, he decided to get out of Hawkins.

It had started out as just a breather, a break from everything.

Steve packed his bags, left his ever-absent parents a note so they wouldn't worry *too much*, and got Nancy to drive him to the bus station. The rest of the gang sort of invited themselves along for the ride, to see their party member off with true camaraderie.

"You sure you want to do this?" Nancy had said, her knuckles white from gripping the steering wheel so hard.

No. Steve had thought. He really wasn't sure -- he was terrified. But, he forced a smile, and put on those stupid ray bans Nancy had secretly loved only so many months ago, and said, "Nance, I'm going

to be fine,” he turned around to address the rest of the party, “And I know you’re all going to worry about me, but I don’t want you worrying about me too much. Besides, I got my bat in my bag, just in case.”

“Steve!” Nancy said, slapping him on the arm. Steve just smiled rakishly back at her, and a twist in his stomach reminded him that she wasn’t his anymore.

Dustin hadn’t taken the news of Steve leaving very well, and he sat in the back of the car despondently, trying not to look like a wet cat.

After saying goodbyes, giving hugs and grabbing his bags, Steve pulled Dustin aside, knowing how much he meant to the kid, and knowing how much the kid meant to him.

“When are you gonna come back?” Dustin asked, looking at Steve with desperation plain on his face.

Steve took off the ray bans, “I don’t know.” he said honestly.

“You’re gonna call right? Every night?” Dustin’s voice cracked.

“Well, maybe not --“ Steve saw the look on the kid’s face “Yes, every night. Definitely. 8 o’clock sound good to you?”

Dustin nodded, and they hugged goodbye.

“Steve!” Nancy yelled over to him from near her car, “Your bus is going to leave soon, you don’t want to miss it!”

“Ok, be good kid. And if anything comes up, you know what to do.”

Dustin nodded, and Steve pretended he didn't see that Dustin wiped away some tears. *Poor kid.*

Steve walked Dustin over to the car, opened the door for him, and said his final goodbyes before heading to the bus.

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He boarded the bus, and then he was on his way to Chicago.

Steve was freaking out a little bit; he had no plan, no idea what to do once he got there, no idea **what** he wanted to do once he got there. It had been a spur of the moment sort of thing, you see. All senior year, Steve had been asking himself what he wanted to do after graduating, and he always came up with nothing. It was terrifying thinking of a future without the certainty of seeing the same people everyday, of having such a big change in his life. It wasn't the same type of terrified he had felt facing the demogorgon or the demodogs; it was the type of fear that laced his blood, sat in the pit of his stomach and at the base of his neck, right between his shoulder blades, like a sore muscle.

All Steve knew, when he asked himself what he wanted to do, was that if he stayed in Hawkins, he was going to have a bad time. It was more of a feeling than anything.

He wanted to go somewhere where people wouldn't look at him like he was King Steve, seeing the people he had history with. He wanted to be somewhere where he could remake himself, walk along the streets without meeting a face he knew.

He wanted anonymity, he supposed.

So. Chicago seemed like the right decision, because it was a decision.

In this, Steve felt assured that he did the right thing, maybe he just

hadn't planned it out well enough beforehand.

Steve knew some people thought he might fail, like Tommy or Carol, who had gotten wind of his plan through the small town grapevine. But others, like Nancy, the party, even Jonathan supported him.

So he went. End of story.

Not really.

It had been three days, and Steve was slowly running out of money. The idea of going back to Hawkins made him nauseous, to know he had failed. So he decided, fuck it, might as well get a job.

It was pure chance that Steve walked by a 24hr diner that had a "Help Wanted" sign in the window. But he went in, and got a job there that very day. Fuck, was he ever lucky.

It was a night shift, but Steve didn't mind that so much; he didn't like the dark anymore, wasn't willing to trust it enough to sleep in it, to put himself in such a vulnerable state. It was just an involuntary reflex at this point. Steve would stay up all night in his cheap hotel room, sleep until noon, then go out and explore the city to his hearts content.

He finally got a hold of his parents a couple of days later, who were frantic after reading his letter.

They convinced him to let them buy him an apartment; Steve maybe wasn't the brightest crayon in the box, but he was smart enough to know when to swallow his pride. A free apartment? How could he pass that up? *Not easily*, was the answer.

It was actually about a fifteen minute walk between his new apartment and the diner, which suited Steve just fine. Chicago in the summer was wonderfully warm, and he didn't mind at all walking to and from the diner.

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It had been a rough couple of months in Chicago. A mix of homesickness and panic attacks at the creaks and groans coming from his upstairs neighbours put Steve on edge, and he was grateful he had something to occupy him during the nights.

Steve had persevered, though, and had even made friends through his work. They weren't like friends from home, who would understand what he went through every time he blanched at the darkness, or every stray sound, but, they were friends, and it made Steve grateful to have something besides his job to ground him in Chicago, gave him a reason to stay.

It had been a slow night at the Diner, meaning that Steve usually cleaned when he wasn't serving a stray customer, or just staring out into the darkened street. He had a lot of time to kill, but he was okay with that.

Steve could hear a rumble of an engine coming down the street, and what looked to be a camaro pulled into a spot in the parking lot. A figure stepped out, who was in low relief. Steve could see the glow of his cigarette as the figure pulled on it, and saw it fall to the ground under the heel of the stranger.

Steve watched involuntarily as the figure walked into the harsh glare of the diner, and took the him in.

It was a guy, about his age, who looked feral, wild. He had a curly blonde mane cut into a mullet, and piercing blue eyes, one of which sported a deep purple bruise, and his pink lips were split in a couple of places.

The man wore his shirt open, and the tightest pair of fucking pants Steve had ever fucking seen.

Steve's reaction was mixed; on one hand, he was sure this guy was the cockiest piece of shit he had ever laid eyes on, and knew he was going to be trouble for Steve. Oh, but only the best kind of trouble.

Hadn't someone told Steve not to fall for the bad guys? Yeah, Steve was breaking that rule, for sure.

The man sat himself down in the booth, and Steve walked over and started to give him the practiced introduction he gave everybody.

"Cup of coffee." The man interrupted, not even looking at Steve. His voice was gruff.

"I - what?" Steve replied, kind of shocked.

"Cup of coffee." The man turned his head to give Steve a glare, and was met with warm, confused brown eyes.

"Sure, okay." Steve walked away, and came back with a hot cup of coffee for him.

"Do you need any cream or --"

"No."

Steve huffed. "Okay. Just holler if you need anything, then."

"I won't." The guy wasn't even looking at him anymore.

So much for being nice, Steve thought, scrubbing his hands through his hair.

The diner sunk back into silence, the only kind that could come at 3 in the morning.

For lack of anything better to do, Steve wiped down the counters, **again**, carefully glancing over at the man in the booth under his eyelashes.

The man, who Steve had decided to call *Mullet*, just looked out the window, hands around his untouched cup of coffee. Steve could see he was bouncing his leg underneath the table.

Steve gave up trying to make himself busy, he had finished cleaning hours ago. He had taken to bringing books to the diner, to read in his spare time. As long as the customers were happy, the manager didn't really seem to care.

He settled onto one of the stools, turned around and leaned against the counter, paperback book in hand.

It was some stupid science fiction book he'd picked up at a book sale. In Steve's opinion, it had nothing on what he and the party had gone through in the past two years, but he had nothing else to do, so he made himself invest in the characters.

The bell above the door jingled, and Steve looked up to see the man getting into his car and speeding off into the night. On his table, there was a still full cup of coffee, and a fiver beside it.

Who wastes good coffee? Ok, maybe it wasn't *that* good, it was good enough.

Trying to get the strange experience out of his mind, Steve cleaned the table, poured the coffee down the drain (*what a waste*), and went back to his book. Nobody bothered him for the rest of his shift.

The same thing happened the next night, and then the next. Each time Mullet had a new bruise, or a split lip, or he was limping. Steve started to worry.

On the fifth night, Steve brought a cup of coffee to Mullet as well as a pack of ice for his swollen eye.

"Thanks." Mullet muttered, and pressed the ice pack against his eye and hissed through his teeth. "What are you staring at, pretty boy?"

Steve started. Had he been staring? He was still near the booth, arms folded across his front, brows furrowed.

"Who keeps beating you up?" Steve asked out of the blue.

"None of your fucking business, princess."

Steve tried to ignore the stupid pet names, but it got under his skin.

"Okay." Steve had to let the insult go, it looked like Mullet wanted a fight, and Steve certainly did not want to lose his job and move back to Hawkins just because of a fight. So, he went and sat on his stool, picking up his new paperback, and started reading.

There was a stiff and uncomfortable silence, but eventually Steve succumbed to his book, bringing himself into the world of whatever-the-fuck he was reading. Hadn't really been paying attention.

"What're you reading?" Mullet asked.

"I don't know, I don't really care that much." Steve replied honestly.

Mullet smirked, then winced. He was restless in his seat. "Then why

are fucking reading it?”

Steve paused, looking at Mullet like he was a little insane. Steve gestured to the empty diner. “Does it look like there’s anything to do around here at bumfuck o’clock?”

Mullet huffed out a laugh. It sounded tired and strained.

“Fair enough.” Mullet said.

They were lulled back into silence. Mullet sipped at his coffee, and winced again.

“You know this coffees fucking awful, right?”

Steve frowned. He wasn’t the best at making coffee, but how hard could it actually be?

He went to sit across from Mullet in his booth, and took his coffee from him, Mullet watching him with a hawk eye. Steve tasted the coffee. It was fucking bitter as fuck.

“Shit.” Steve said, shaking his head.

Mullet laughed quietly trying to keep his face from hurting.

“It’s a good thing you’re so pretty.” Mullet said, charm dripping from his voice.

Steve flushed, and looked down into the cup of coffee.

Mullet snorted. “See you ‘round, princess. Thanks for the ice.”

He picked out a fiver from his back pocket, and hoisted himself from the table.

“My name’s Steve, asshole!” Steve called out after him.

Mullet just laughed.

2. Steve Loses His Cool (a little)

Summary for the Chapter:

recap: Steve and Billy meet, Steve calls him Mullet and they strike up ... something.

The next night, Steve was anticipating Mullet's arrival. It was always sometime around 3am, and Mullet's car would rumble in, and Steve would get a cup of coffee ready (Hopefully it wouldn't taste like shit this time), and grab an ice pack from out of the freezer in the back.

While Steve was in the back, he heard the door bell jingle, and when he came back out, Mullet was sitting at his regular booth with an arm in a sling.

Steve brows furrowed, and he really started to worry. He brought the coffee and the ice pack over, and sat down across the table from Mullet.

Steve could see from his stance that he was not going to be willing to talk about why the fuck his arm was in a sling. There was just no way, and Steve knew that. Still, he had to worry, it was just in his nature. He needed to start out slow.

"What's your name?" Steve asked. Mullet looked up from his coffee with surprise quickly slipping into guarded calm.

"Why do you want to know?" he sounded genuinely curious.

Steve sighed and rubbed his hands through his hair, not catching the way Mullet watched his hands. He sat down in the booth, and looked at the man across from him.

“Well, since you’re here a lot, I figure I should probably be like all those waitresses in those movies that know all the regular’s names.”

Mullet quirked his eyebrow. “Which movies?”

Steve drew a blank. “Like, I dunno, but you know what I’m talking about.” *Right? I’m not being insane here?*

Mullet leaned back and the leather crackled under the change of weight.

“Besides,” Steve continued, “I call you Mullet, and I don’t know if I can do it anymore. I mean, you have to admit, it’s a pretty terrible nickname.”

Mullet huffed, and looked down at his coffee. “Yeah, that’s a bad fuckin’ nickname.”

Steve could see Mullet relax in his seat, his shoulders slumped a little, and a smile played at his mouth.

“Not as bad as princess, though.” Steve replied. Mullet snorted.

They sat in silence, Steve waiting the man out. Eventually, the guy had to say something, right?

“Billy,” he muttered down to his cup of coffee. Steve could barely hear him. Billy looked up, his bright baby blues were shining from the contrast of the deep purple bruise that ringed his eye. “Billy Hargrove.”

Steve looked at him warmly. “Nice to meet you. Steve Harrington.”

“Pleasure,” Billy said with a voice that was thick with sarcasm.

Steve paused, then started, trying to find a way to get the information he wanted without having Billy destroy everything. By the way Billy’s fists looked, all split and bloody, he could throw some good punches, and Steve didn’t want to be on the receiving end of one of them.

“What? Spit it out, goddammit.” Billy said, his voice low and gravelly. Steve couldn’t admit to himself that it did things to him.

“How’d you even drive here?” He blurted out.

Billy smirked, and said, “What, it’s just dislocated. I can take it out, just hurts, is all.”

Just dislocated? Was this guy for real!?

Steve swallowed and started tearing one of the napkins on the table into tiny pieces.

“How’d it happen?”

Billy sighed. “Alright,” he said, getting up from the table, “I’ve had enough of your shit for one night.”

“What?”

Billy stuck his face up in Steve’s space, and pointed a finger at his nose. “You just don’t know when to keep your nose out of things, do

you, *Steven*? Fuck you.” His words were venomous.

Without another word, Billy up and walked out of the diner, got into his car, and drove away.

Steve watched out the window, stock still in the booth.

“Fuck,” he said, when he looked down. Billy had forgotten to pay. Ah well, Steve thought, Might as well just open a tab for him.

Billy didn't show up again. It had been a week, and Steve's life was worser for it. Yes, he had other people come in during his shift, but none who started conversations with him, or any that he would've liked to talk to.

Steve might have admitted to himself in the deepest bouts of his insomnia that he was really worried about the guy; with his bruises, cuts, split lips, dislocated shoulders and sprained ankles, Steve either assumed he was in a gang, and going through a ritual introduction, or whatever, or, that Billy was getting beat up by someone both physically larger and stronger than him.

It was almost hard to believe that anyone could be stronger — Steve could see Billy's muscled figure even in his minds eye. Though he had concentrated on his injuries, Steve didn't not notice the way Billy's shirts were always filled out nicely, his toned chest, golden in the Chicago summer.

Steve sighed, ran his fingers through his hair, and went to mop the floor for the second time that night

.

Once he was done, he sat on a stool, and stared out into the night. He almost missed the phone's insistent ringing.

He picked up the phone, not knowing what to expect. Who calls at 4 in the morning?

"Sunrise Diner, Steve speaking." Steve leaned against the wall next to the phone. There was nobody on the other end of the line. If there was, they were silent.

"Hello?" Steve prompted.

The other end came to life. "Uh, hi. I'm at Provident Hospital. Broke my wrist. Come pick me up."

It was Billy. Of course the fucker wouldn't ask nicely, but in that moment it didn't matter to Steve. His head swam a little, his chest was tight and it became hard to breathe. *What the fuck happened this time!?*

"Steve?"

The sound of Billy's voice broke Steve out of his reverie, and Steve responded with a quick "Yeah, okay. You in emergency?"

"Yeah."

"Be there soon. Bye."

Billy hung up.

Steve ran his hands through his hair for what felt like the millionth

time this week. Steve called to the ever best cook that he was picking up a friend, and the cook gave his consent. Steve would have to lock up for a couple of minutes, because it probably wasn't safe to leave someone all alone in a diner at 4 in the fucking morning in a big city like Chicago. Hopefully the boss wouldn't mind, and Steve could keep living in Chicago.

He didn't have a car. Fuck. He called a cab company when he found an old phonebook tucked away under the counters.

Steve put up a hastily scribbled Back in five sign, and locked the door, opting to wait outside in the warm night.

The cab pulled up shortly, and Steve asked for Provident Hospital, and off they went.

"Hey buddy," The cabbie spoke up, "Is this an emergency situation? Should I be driving faster?"

"No," Steve chuckled, "Just picking up..." Steve trailed off. What could he call Billy? "Just picking up a friend. No worries, just a broken wrist. Should be fine."

"Ah. Okay. Good to know." the cabbie said. Steve could see the cabbie's eyes on him reflected on the rearview mirror. "Why do you look so worried, then?"

"Because the dickwad has been getting himself into trouble. He won't tell me, and it isn't fun to see him with a new injury every time I see him, you know?"

"You're a good friend, then." the cabbie replied, and Steve could hear the smile in his voice.

“Yeah, I guess.” he replied.

The rest of the ride was spent in silence, Steve going over in his head how he should approach Billy. The last thing Steve wanted was for Billy to run away. Something in him insisted that he should care, that he should worry. It was an undeniable force, and it kept Steve up when he should be sleeping.

They pulled up to the hospital, and the cabbie wished him luck. Steve paid, and the cabbie left, leaving Steve to turn towards the hospital.

He shoved his hands into his pockets and walked through the parking lot and into the reception area of the emergency centre.

Inside there were a plethora of miserable and ill looking people. Steve had never liked hospitals, and avoided them whenever he could. But, at times like these, he supposes that he's glad they exist.

Billy spots him first, and walks up to Steve with no swagger in his hips.

Steve took Billy in. Cast on the arm that was dislocated, a yellow bruise on his cheekbone that he had seen last week, a dark purple one along his jaw that must have been new, and a smattering of scrapes and bruises along his chest that was covered by a mostly open shirt.

“Take a polaroid, it'll last longer.” Billy grunted without much fire.

“Hi to you too, Billy.” Steve replied, crossing his arms.

“Let's go, I need to have a smoke.” Billy walked past Steve, bumping into his shoulder purposefully. Steve rolled his eyes and followed Billy.

“Did you drive here?” Steve had to ask, he needed to know if he should call another cab.

“Yeah.” Billy wouldn’t look at him, but he could feel Steve’s quizzical gaze, “I still have one good arm, dipshit.”

“Then why did you phone me!?”

“Because they wouldn’t fucking let me fucking leave if I didn’t have someone to drive me. God, get with the program.”

“Get with the program?!” Oh no, Steve was freaking out. Big time. “You get with the fucking program! I had to close the diner because I thought I had to pick you up! You - you come in with all these bruises, these casts and slings, like it’s no big fucking thing, and you don’t expect me to freak the fuck out even when you look like this!? What the fuck man, I don’t know if I can do this shit.”

Steve’s head was swimming, and his heart was beating against his ribcage like it was trying to get out. He hadn’t felt like this in a long time.

Billy just looked at him coolly. He took a long pull on his cigarette and let out the smoke long and slow while Steve regained his composure.

“Are you done?” he asked, his voice low and gravelly. It sent shivers down Steve’s spine, but he barely noticed.

“No, I’m not.” Steve said, but he couldn’t open his mouth, it just stayed shut, and he looked up at Billy as he let out more smoke. Billy looked down at him, threw down his cigarette without a care, and

smothered it under his heel.

“Let’s go then, princess. I’ll drive you back to work.”

“Don’t fucking call me princess, asshole.”

“If the shoes fits...” Billy replied, laughing quietly at Steve’s expression. Steve rolled his eyes, and walked with Billy to his camaro. He had had more than enough for one night.

Billy unlocked the car, and Steve almost fell into the passenger seat. It was lower to the ground than he expected.

Billy started the car, and something weird happened to Steve’s stomach, but he couldn’t place it. He decided to put it away for now.

They sped off into the Chicago night.

The ride was quiet, the rumble of the engine purring and metal playing softly on the radio almost putting Steve to sleep. Had he been less on edge, he would have.

When they reached the diner, Billy parked and waited for Steve to get out. Steve noticed. He wasn’t gonna go for that shit.

“Look. I don’t fucking know what your problem is, and I’m not gonna pretend that I get what you’re going through. But, if it is what I think it is, I have a couch. You can sleep on it. If you want. Like, what else would you do, sleep in your car? Drive around until you can’t see straight anymore?”

Steve was scared that Billy was going to run away on him, but Billy

kind of just stared at him, and there was an expression in his eyes Steve couldn't interpret.

Billy stared at him for several seconds, and replied "Okay." and that was it.

Steve was surprised, no, he was fucking shocked. But, he didn't want to ruin his chances and go and say something that Billy could turn against him.

Steve checked his watch. Four thirty. "I get off in half an hour."

Billy nodded, and stepped out of the car, Steve doing the same.

Steve unlocked the diner, and they both walked in, and after Steve brought an ice pack for Billy's face, they took their spots at their table. They sat in comfortable silence until the sun peaked over the horizon.

When the day team arrived, Steve and Billy left, Steve giving Billy directions of how to get to his apartment. It wasn't long before Steve was opening the door, and let himself and Billy into his new home.

It wasn't much, but it felt like home. Steve had tried to make it as liveable as possible, and with his parents help, he begrudgingly got a sofa, a bed, a table, and a few chairs. *A graduation present*, he reasoned with himself.

Billy moved past him to flop down on his couch. Steve went to make something to eat, and decided that he might as well make Billy something to eat while he was there.

Turkey and swiss on rye. It was a damn good sandwich.

By the time Steve had put back the ingredients and made his way to the couch, Billy was already asleep. His face was so peaceful, and Steve knew then that he was staring. He laid the sandwich down on the ground, when to his bed and ate his, and curled under the covers as the early sun shone through his window.

Steve wanted to go over what had happened that night. He fell asleep without even trying.

Notes for the Chapter:

Well that was fun! I hope I got the characters right, it's weird that they don't have a punching match to start off from. Damn. Ah well.

Any constructive criticism is welcomed! Thanks for reading!

3. Heatwave

Summary for the Chapter:

recap: Billy's wrist gets broken, Steve takes him back to his apartment, where they both crash.

Billy woke slowly. It felt like he was burning up from the inside, his shirt slick with sweat and sticking to his skin. His blood coursed through his veins like magma, and his head threatened to burst from the pressure.

He groaned low in his throat, and brought up a hand to rub his eyes, and was suddenly reminded of the fact that his wrist was broken when the cast collided with his face. Pain shot through his arm and spread through his body, making his head pound harder than before.

With great effort, and a sense of self preservation, Billy sat up on the couch and waited out the dizziness that overtook his senses. Fuck, he felt like he was gonna throw up.

When he felt he was ready, he stood up, and opened his eyes to find himself somewhere completely foreign to him. *What the fuck*, he thought, *where the fuck am I?*

His memories slowly seeped back through his mind like molasses, and he realized he was in Steve's apartment. When had he agreed to that?

Billy looked around, trying to find a bathroom where he could either throw up or sit in the shower. He decided to try the hallway beside

the kitchen, and started towards it when he stepped on a fucking sandwich.

Who the fuck puts a sandwich on the floor?! Steve would, the dickfuck.

Billy didn't have time for this shit, he felt like he was literally going to die. He stepped off the sandwich, leaving it where it was, because *fuck you, Harrington*, and found the bathroom, and closed the door.

Disregarding his clothes, Billy jumped in the shower, turned on the spray, and sat down.

Cold water spread across his feverish skin and Billy thought he'd never be so grateful for frigid water.

For once, Billy was patient, waiting for his head to stop swimming, and his nausea to go away.

For lack of anything better to do, Billy took in Steve's bathroom. Billy could tell that Steve used some real girly shit. Billy didn't know the brand, but he could smell the sweet perfume of the shampoo and soap floating through the air. He looked up to the counter, there were brushes and hair products, and... *was that Farah Fawcett spray?*

"So the pretty boy uses Farah Fawcett spray..." Billy mumbled to himself, leaning back and letting himself fall into a trance while the cold water washed over his cooling skin. Billy chuckled and winced at the pain. His head hadn't liked that.

Shit, was he supposed to get his cast wet? Billy didn't know, but he didn't think it really mattered at this point. It was probably fucked either way.

...

Steve jolted awake to the sound of the shower turning on. He was sensitive to that kind of shit now, every little sound put him on edge, and he hated that that was he what he had turned into. *Billy must be taking a shower.*

He was lying in sweat soaked sheets, and shoved his comforter off down to his legs, but cool air didn't brush against him, the heat just stuck to his skin. It made him lightheaded, and Steve stared up at the ceiling in an attempt to get his bearings.

Wait, did I not turn on the air conditioner? Shit. He must have forgotten to turn it on when he got home, the way he usually did, because some dickhead had needed his help.

Steve jumped out of bed and ran to the thermostat by the front door, turning the air conditioner on high. He could hear the air start to blow through the vents in the floor and the ceiling, and anticipated the coolness.

He couldn't bring himself to close the blinds, though. The dark made him wary, and he was too tired and hot to be on edge. *Fuck, why did Chicago have to be so fucking hot?*

Since the bathroom was occupied, he retrieved bottled water from the fridge, and chugged it until his throat was frozen. He could feel the cold spread through his limbs. It made him feel better, if only a little.

He turned to the phone hanging on the wall next to the fridge, contemplating calling back home. Steve checked his watch, saw that it was only two in the afternoon, and decided to wait until later in the evening, when the party would be home from school. It was a Friday today, and that meant that everybody would be over at the Wheeler's house for DnD night.

Steve felt a pang in his chest; he missed those little shitheads, missed their companionship and loyalty. But, he knew if he went back, then nothing would change, and he would be stuck as he once was: the retired King of Hawkins High, someone scared for the future, someone with less-than-ideal options to choose from.

“Got any spare clothes?”

Steve jumped around, heart beating hard in his chest, to see Billy standing in his hallway, soaking wet, with all his clothes still on, water dripping down onto the floor. Had it been anybody but Billy, Steve would have been unaffected. But the fact that Billy was standing in his fucking kitchen, with the sun catching the droplets of water running down his golden, bare chest, made it fucking obscene. Billy stood there, gazing at him from under thick eyelashes, eyes filled with something Steve swore he couldn't recognize. Steve's mouth went dry, and he could feel himself staring, but couldn't seem to drag his eyes away.

Billy smiled and dragged his tongue over his lower lip, and Steve realized too late that he was in just boxers, and was sweaty and unkempt from his fitful sleep.

“Are you just gonna stand there looking pretty, or are you gonna do something, princess?” Billy sounded pleased with himself, like a cat who had caught a bird.

Steve didn’t want to think about which role he played in that analogy.

The thought made him jump to action. God, why was he so jumpy? There was just something about Billy that set him off.

“Yeah sure, let me grab something.” Steve said in a rush, trying to squeeze past Billy to get to his room. Billy wasn’t giving him a lot of room to work with, and to Steve it seemed almost like Billy was trying to get in his way, crowd his space.

Steve pushed past him, and shivered as his shoulder brushed Billy’s, cold water landing on his heated skin.

He couldn’t look back as he walked to his room, Steve couldn’t deal with whatever Billy was trying to do to him. *Was he trying to fuck with me?* Steve wondered. He seemed like the type of guy to just fuck with people. He could feel Billy’s eyes trailing after him as he walked to his room, could practically *hear* his smugness emanating through the small hallway.

Steve closed the door to his room and sat on his bed for a moment, trying to get his thoughts back after having them short circuit.

Clothes. They needed clothes. Right. Steve went to his closet and started his hunt. He hadn't brought a lot of clothes with him to Chicago, but he had enough for a few good options.

...

Billy took one of the towels from the bathroom and wiped his face dry. He still felt like shit, but cooler, and not so lightheaded. Billy could feel the cool air spreading through the apartment. Steve must have turned on the air conditioning. *God, Steve was such an idiot.*

He leaned against the kitchen counter, and took in Steve's apartment for the first time. It was sparsely furnished: a table and a couple of chairs sat in the corner of the living room, the couch Billy had slept on, and that was about it for the living room.

From what he had seen, though, the place felt *lived in*. There was a pile of paperback books underneath the table, and one propped open face down on top of it, with a dirty plate and an empty mug set down next to it.

Wherever he set his eyes, Billy could see a photograph. Some of them were framed, some of them weren't. There were a bunch on his fridge, and Billy looked over to inspect them, ignoring the fact that he was dripping on the floor, because *fuck you, Harrington*.

There was one of Steve and a girl with a small mouth and big shiny eyes, both beaming out at him, arms slung around each other. Billy felt a flare of anger in the pit of his stomach, and his gaze shifted to the photo beside it.

There was another one of Steve with his head thrown back, in the middle of a belly laugh, eyes squeezed shut, and it made Billy smile. There was a kid next to him with curly caramel hair underneath a baseball cap and a big goofy grin on his face, holding a three musketeers bar in his hand. Whatever the kid said, it must have been funny.

The one that caught Billy's interest the most was the one on the corner of the fridge.

It was almost like a family portrait, but there was no way everybody in the photo was related to each other, they were all too different. There was what looked like a police man, with an arm wrapped around a small woman with mousy hair, looking at each other like they were sharing a secret, five kids pushing each other, not even bothering to look at the camera, that girl with the big doe eyes gesturing to a figure running to get into the frame just as the shutter went off, back to the camera with one foot in the air. Steve was behind the kids, laughing down at them, with a bruised eye and a split lip, and over his shoulder was a ... *baseball bat with nails? What the actual fuck?*

Billy was taken out of his inspection of the photographs by the sound of padding feet. Steve returned dressed in a t-shirt and basketball shorts, and held out clothes to Billy, who took them into the bathroom to change without so much as a *thanks*. Billy kind of felt bad about it, but he was caught up in the picture. *What would Steve be doing with a bat full of nails? Was he in a cult, or something? No, the*

people looked too happy to be in a fucking cult. But then, what could it be?

Changing was harder than Billy expected; he felt sore all over, and the cast made it awkward. But, he managed. He looked at himself in Steve's mirror, grinning down at the Farah Fawcett spray on the sink. Steve's clothes were a little tight on him, seeing as Steve was a fucking bean pole. That was fine with Billy though, he liked the way the sleeveless tee and shorts stretched over his muscles. He almost hoped perversely that Steve would like it when he saw that Billy was wearing *his* clothes, but he shut that thought down real fucking quick. *He didn't need that kind of shit right now.*

The thought lingered at the back of his mind as he opened the door, leaving his wet clothes and shoes in a pile in the tub, and found Steve in the kitchen hovering over his coffee machine.

Steve glanced over at him, and did a double take as he took in Billy. Fuck, he was like some kind of god with a godawful haircut, toned body showing through *his* fucking clothes. Billy saw Steve's eyes glance over his body, and satisfaction pooled at the bottom of his stomach.

"Coffee?" Steve asked, feigning cool as well as he could. Billy strode over to lean against the opposite counter and crossed his arms. "Sure, as long as you don't make it shit like you usually do." It came out meaner than Billy expected, but like hell he was going to apologize.

"Wait what? Fuck you." Steve said, turning to face Billy, his face flushed red. "I pick you up from the hospital, let you into my home, give you my own fucking clothes, offer you coffee, and you insult me? What the fuck's wrong with you?!"

Steve could see the crestfallen look on Billy's face, and hated the look on him. Still, he had a right to feel angry. He could see Billy's jaw working from across the tiny space, and waited for his reply.

It was a long, tense moment.

Billy's knee started to bounce, he was itching for a smoke. He walked to the bathroom, picked up his wet clothes, walked past the kitchen to the door and stuck his boots on his feet.

Steve followed him, hands on hips, looking at Billy blankly.

"I, uh, thanks for the clothes." Billy said through gritted teeth, and then opened the door and slammed it shut.

Steve stood there, half shocked, half relieved, the sound of an engine revving and tires screeching shocking him back to life.

"What the fuck just happened?" he muttered, running his hands through his hair.

He stared at the door until the phone rang.

Notes for the Chapter:

This was a lot of fun to write! I hope it was as fun to read! I tried slowing down! Not a lot happened in

this chapter, but that's great!

Maybe this cult thing will turn up again... we'll just have to wait and see!

4. Plant Your Fucking Feet (Get Your Head in the Game)

Summary for the Chapter:

recap: Steve forgets to turn on the air conditioner, Billy wakes up and takes a cold shower, they exchange clothes, Billy says something in a way he doesn't mean, Billy runs away, leaving Steve exasperated. The phone rings.

Notes for the Chapter:

This is not the greatest chapter but it is a chapter, and will probs lead to something good.
(yes i found it absolutely necessary to make a hsm reference because I'm fucking tired and everything is so funny rn it's hard to believe)

“Hello?” Steve said in a daze.

“Steve?”

“Nancy?”

“Steve! You were supposed to call! Why didn’t you?”

Oh shit. “Uh,” Steve fumbled, “Sorry, I just got distracted, is all.” *Of course you got fucking distracted, moron.*

“You sound a little out of sorts, is everything okay?”

Steve took a deep breath, and tried to make himself sound as rational as possible. “Nance, everything is fine. How’s university?”

Nancy paused, and Steve just *knew* that she somehow knew more than she was letting on. She was so shrewd, that’s part of the reason why Steve loved her so much.

A knot in his stomach clenched, and he ran his free hand through his hair in exasperation.

She started chattering about her classes, and Steve half listened to the conversation as he went and grabbed a towel - thank goodness his phone had a long-ass cord - to wipe the water pooled in the hallway and in front of the refrigerator, because the asswipe hadn’t bothered to actually stay in the bathroom where the fucking towels were and dry himself off.

“How’re things going with you? How’s the job?”

“Oh, you know...” What was he supposed to tell her? *Oh yeah, there’s this guy who wears really tight pants and I let him crash at my place last night and stared at him because he looks like an underwear model and he’s making me really confused about my sexuality.* He settled on “Fine.”

“Really?”

Steve snorted, mopping up the water with his foot. “Nance, you sound surprised. I thought you had more faith in me!”

“I-I do, I just... You doing okay?”

“I’m doing fine, Nance.”

“You sure?”

“I’m *sure*, everything is fine! I mean, I have an apartment in Chicago, a job, some new friends, what else could a guy want?”

Nancy sighed, and Steve wasn’t sure how to interpret it.

“Okay. Just wanted to check in. I’ll have the guys call when they get home.”

“Alright, talk to you later.”

Steve hung up, and looked at the pictures on his fridge. Okay, so *maybe* he felt a little homesick, it wasn’t like he hadn’t felt it before. He could deal with it. He could go out with friends, he had his job. It wasn’t like he was suffering... he was just homesick, that’s it.

He started to clean his tiny apartment, and went to grab the dirty plate and mug off his table when he stepped on the sandwich.

“Fuck!” Steve yelled, and he could see the boot marks in the squished bread. *Who the fuck puts a sandwich on the ground?*

I do, fuck, I do.

...

Steve walked to work as the sun set, hands in pockets. He was thinking of all the possibilities of what could happen that night. Would Billy show up? What if he did? What if he didn't? What if he was pissed off? Should Steve apologize for blowing up at him? Should he not apologize? Would the guy even accept an apology?

The best course of action Steve could come up with was to just see how the night went, and he *hated* that kind of plan. When he got stressed out like this, he just wanted to know what to do to make it stop, but it seemed like this time there wasn't anything he could do to stop freaking out about it.

He relieved the evening shift, and watched the sun set below the Chicago skyscrapers. Steve opened up his newest paperback, eyeing the door about every thirty seconds waiting for a certain mullet-wearing prick to show up.

It wasn't long until Steve got frustrated and gave up reading. He

cleaned the diner from top to bottom, and still no Billy. *Where the fuck was he?*

The sky was turning blue by the time the camaro revved into the parking lot, and Billy stepped out. Steve had never before been so relieved and so anxious at the same time. The closer Billy approached the diner, the more freaked out Steve got.

Billy stepped in the doorway and walked towards Steve, holding something in his hands. Had Steve's brain not been so preoccupied with remembering how to speak, he would have noticed the way Billy's shoulders were hunched forward, the concentrated look on his face, the way his eyes avoided Steve's.

"Here're your clothes." Billy growled, and set the clothes down on the counter next to Steve. Then he walked back out of the diner, and drove off back into the night.

How could this guy leave Steve so speechless? Steve supposed that it wasn't that hard to leave him speechless, but he thought he'd have been a little tougher after facing creatures from another dimension, or whatever.

Steve looked over at his clothes. They were folded neatly, and looked freshly laundered.

Without thinking, he picked up the tee he had given Billy and held it to his nose quickly, like if someone caught him he'd be in deep shit.

It smelled like fresh laundry, cologne, and cigarettes, and Steve had never smelt something so wonderful in his life.

When he got back to his apartment, he tucked the clothes neatly into his mostly empty closet, just in case Billy had to come back over.

...

Whenever Steve had a night off, he was always itching for something to do. Nightmares plagued him at night, and Steve had to do something to occupy his thoughts.

The night after Billy had brought back his clothes, Steve had a night off and decided to go and pick up a game of basketball at one of the courts scattered around the city. He usually went to the one a handful of blocks from his apartment, but tonight he felt like something different.

Steve walked around until he found a court, walked in with an easy smile, asked if he could join the game, and soon he was passing the ball to the other guys and shooting hoops.

It was invigorating, shaking the cobwebs out of the corners of his mind, and Steve liked how he could feel his muscles straining, his heart beating out a steady rhythm in his chest.

Steve dribbled, back to the hoop, getting crowded by the defense. He was low to the ground with his back hunched over the ball. He heard

one of his teammates call somewhere over his left shoulder. “Open, open!” they yelled.

Steve ran to action, suddenly skirting the width of the court to get rid of defense, passed to the open guy, and ran up the court to the hoop.

Somehow the guy managed to sneak the ball right past the hip of the guy crowding him, and Steve picked it up and did a lay-up. The ball bounced against the backboard, and swooshed through the net.

His team was cheering him and patting him on the back. He must have missed the sounds of a rumbling engine parked just outside of the fence, but Steve heard the door slam, and looked over to see Billy in stupid fucking shorts with converses on, and a muscle shirt.

The other guys welcomed him in with cheers and whoops of “Billy!” and “You showed up!”.

One of the guys, Steve thought his name might be Riley — he wasn’t sure — clapped him on the back.

“Dude, prepare to get your ass kicked. Billy’s the best player around, he’s gonna wipe the court with your face.”

“Is that so?” Steve peered over at Billy, who took off his shirt to reveal his toned body that practically glowed in the dusk and amber lights surrounding the court.

“Yeah, just thought I should warn you.” Riley clapped him on the back again, and walked off.

Billy glanced over in Steve’s general direction, probably sensing someone staring at him, and did a double take. Billy’s eyes grew darker in the low light staring at Steve, if that was even possible. A cheshire grin grew on his face, and he stalked towards Steve like a predator stalking prey.

Goosebumps raced across Steve’s heated skin, and he owed it to the coolness of the evening.

“Harrington.” Billy crowed.

“You know him?” one of the other guys called out while everybody was getting drinks.

“Yeah. I know him.” Billy hadn’t even turned around to give the guy the answer. “Tell me, Harrington, how good are you at basketball?”

“Good enough to beat your cocky ass.” Steve replied, hoping that he looked defiant with hands on hips, because he wasn’t entirely convinced he could beat Billy.

Hargrove laughed and gave Steve a cocky grin, hands crossed over his front. “Yeah, we’ll see about that.”

Steve gritted his teeth, he needed to beat this fucking dick, Hargrove needed to be knocked down a few pegs.

Soon, they were starting another game, and Steve was given the ball first. Hargrove was on him immediately, crowding his space and yelling insults to him.

Fuck, the guy was intense, but like hell was Steve gonna let him win.

It was so fucking on.

Steve faked Billy out and went to pass to the other direction, but Billy was quick on his feet. Billy caught the ball and was already running down the court before Steve had realized what had happened.

“What the fuck?” He muttered to himself and ran his hand through his hair.

Billy dodged player after player, and slam dunked the fucking ball.

“Told you he was good.” Riley panted beside Steve.

It was too fucking much, and it fuelled Steve to try harder. His high school training couldn't let him down now.

They regrouped, and started again.

Steve passed the ball to his right, and Billy was already coming up to him to block him, but Steve just spun past him, running to the hoop, calling for the ball.

He felt the ball in his hand, felt a blow to his shoulder, and then the hard pavement, landing hard on his elbows.

The surprising thing was that Steve didn't even really seem to care. He could feel the hot blood trail down his arms, and it reminded him of Hawkins, but he couldn't think about that right now.

"Plant your feet, Harrington." Hargrove sneered down at him.

Rinse and repeat about fifteen times.

Steve finally managed to score some points for his team, but only because he literally just did a hail mary and threw the ball to the basket, and somehow, managed to get it in.

Steve guessed that the final score was somewhere around a bazillion to three. It was hard to live with.

It was getting late, and the court was lit only by the amber glow of

the streetlights around it. The guys started packing up to leave, making playful banter as they left in small groups. Soon only Steve and Billy were left.

“Where’d you learn to play like that?” Steve asked, catching the towel Billy threw to him, giving him a questioning look.

“For your arms,” Billy replied, “It was shocking that you could keep a grip on the ball with all that blood.”

Steve looked down at his hands and saw in the creases of his palms the remains of the blood that hadn’t come off with the ball. The other guys hadn’t seemed to notice that they played with a bloody ball, or maybe they just didn’t want to say anything.

He poured water over his forearms and wiped away the crusty, dried blood. “You didn’t answer my question.”

Billy stopped, fidgeting with the tape that was tied around his water bottle.

“What can I say, I spent a lot of time on the courts. There wasn’t a lot else to do in California besides fucking chicks and playing ball.”

“You’re from California?”

“Mmhm.” Billy chugged the rest of his water bottle. Steve couldn’t

help but to look at his neck as he drank, he had a jawline that could cut through steel, Steve was certain.

Steve offered the bloodied towel back to Billy, who shook his head. "Keep it."

Of course he wouldn't want a fucking bloody towel, idiot.

"Why are you sticking around?" Billy said, grabbing his keys and walking out of the court.

Steve blinked and looked after him. "What do you mean?"

"Don't you have a job?" Billy was being condescending again, and it drove Steve crazy.

He shrugged. "I have the night off. Didn't have anything else to do."

Billy nodded. "Fair enough."

Steve picked up his things and walked to Billy's car, heart still beating like he was on the court.

"I'm new to Chicago, know anything around that might be fun?"

Billy considered the question for a second. “Yeah, I do. Get in.”

Wait, what?

Steve got in the camaro, totally subject to Billy’s whims. He didn’t really know how he should feel about it.

Were they going to hang out?

Notes for the Chapter:

Steven, get your head in the game!

I wonder what they're gonna do... hmm.

5. Are we friends now?

Summary for the Chapter:

recap: Billy beats Steve's ass in basketball, decides to show Steve the good life in Chicago.

They drove around for a bit, music blaring, windows down in the dog days of Chicago. Steve didn't know what to do with himself at first, but soon he relaxed in his seat, taking in the city by night.

He felt perversely pleased to be seen in the passenger seat of the camaro, obnoxiously loud music blaring out of the stereo system, turning people's heads like they were hot shit. And they were.

Steve felt like Molly Ringwald in the Breakfast Club, meeting the school rebel for clandestine make out sessions. He doubted that Billy would ever take one of his diamond earrings, though.

The thought made Steve simultaneously uncomfortable and curious, but before he could really delve into what the thought entailed, Billy was pulling into a parking lot of a liquor store, turning down the music.

"Stay here." Billy murmured, just loud enough to be heard. He looked at Steve, his eyes glittering darkly in the light of the liquor store.

Had Steve misjudged Billy's age? Maybe Steve had, maybe he just looked really young for his age. Steve was nineteen, and if Billy could buy liquor, then how old was Billy? He tried to curb his freak out by listening to what was playing.

I'm on my way

I'm on my way
Home sweet home
Tonight tonight

He watched as Billy swayed into the shop, and came back out a short while later with two six packs.

Billy got into his seat, and put the beers in the back.

“How old are you?” Steve blurted out. He couldn’t help himself, he *needed* to know what he was getting himself into.

Billy raised his eyebrows infinitesimally, but answered as he turned to look out the back window. “I’m eighteen.” His voice, whether he knew it or not, had gone all honey, and it made Steve shiver. “Why, how old are you?” Billy asked. He was curious, he hoped that Steve wasn’t that much older, or for that matter, younger than him.

“Nineteen. Just wondering how you could get the beer.”

Billy chuckled breathlessly, an involuntary grin spreading on his face. He licked his lips, and glanced at Steve as they came to a stop at a stop light. “Fake ID, never heard of it?”

Steve laughed. “Ok, I’m satisfied.”

“I sure hope you are, got a six pack for each of us. Figure that should

be good enough.”

Steve turned to look at Billy in his seat. Billy was tapping his thumb on the steering wheel in time to the song that was playing, and swivelled his head to return Steve's gaze.

“Where are we even going?” Steve asked, surprisingly not really concerned about his safety.

Billy laughed and turned up the volume on the stereo until it hurt Steve's ears. He wasn't about to complain, though. “You'll see, pretty boy, just wait and see.”

The camaro picked up speed, making Steve's head jerk back.

It was exhilarating driving with Billy. Steve never wanted it to end.

...

They ended up at the top of a hill, just on the outskirts of town, looking down into the city centre. It was beautiful.

But.

Even if Steve wasn't alone, in a car, he still didn't have his bat with

him. He couldn't ever feel completely safe up here in the dark.

Billy reached into the back and shoved one of the six-packs into Steve's hands.

"Come on." Billy grabbed his own, and got out of the camaro. Steve was hesitant, but rationalized that they were too far from Hawkins Lab for anything *that* bad to be out here.

Still though, Steve was nervous.

He opened one of the beers, and downed it before it had time to foam, in an attempt to calm his nerves.

'Woah, Harrington, I didn't take you for the type to knock down a beer like that. Kudos, man.'" The smile in Billy's voice was palpable, and Steve turned to see him sitting on the hood of his car, his face illuminated by the lights of the city below.

It struck Steve then how beautiful he was; he was truly like a lion, majestic and proud, cruel and powerful. Steve scuffed the ground. "Yeah, well, you thought wrong," he came to sit by Billy on the car and scooted his butt up so his feet could rest on the front bumper. "Back in my hometown, I was known as the Keg King, I'll have you know."

"Impressive, bet you'd be a fun drunk."

“How d’you figure that?”

Billy shrugged and took a drink. “Just seems like the type of person you are.” He looked over to Steve with an easy smile on his face. Steve’s breath caught in his throat. He hadn’t realized how close they were, and Billy wasn’t pulling away.

“Yeah, well,” he stuttered, “I wouldn’t know, every time I get drunk it’s usually the black-out kind.” It wasn’t necessarily true, but Steve was so caught up in nerves he barely registered what he was saying.

Billy huffed out a laugh, looking at Steve with an unreadable expression on his face. “Are you a lightweight, or do you have a problem?”

Steve snorted. “Probably both.”

They lapsed into silence, Steve fidgeting with his can, listening to the sounds of the night and the city, and paranoia was slowly creeping into the back of his mind. It didn’t help that Billy was sitting so close as to brush shoulders with him. It distracted Steve, and he couldn’t think straight.

“Ok, why the fuck are you so fidgety?” Billy hadn’t even turned to look at him, but Steve could feel a change in the way Billy held himself, like he was on the defensive, or something.

He sighed, and ran his spare hand through his hair. "I just-" What could he say?

Billy supplied him with an easy answer. "Scared of the dark, Harrington?"

Steve pursed his lips and drank. "Mmm, yeah, a little. More like-" he paused, drinking more to calm his nerves, "I'm scared of what's *in* the dark, you know? Like, the possibility."

Billy nodded, but Steve was sure Billy didn't get it. "Z'at why you have a baseball bat outfitted with a fuckton of nails?"

Steve nearly choked on his beer. He could feel the sting in his nose. *How did Billy know that?* He heard Billy laugh near him, and he chuckled too, his head was swimming. "Yeah, actually. You know, the dark can hold some scary shit, man." He didn't know why he was telling Billy this, but it felt ... good, to have someone at least know a little about what was bothering him, even if it sounded like he was joking.

"Don't I know it." Billy murmured, eyes a million miles away. He reached for his cigarettes and lighter, and Steve was caught up in the way Billy's lips pursed around the stick, and the soft warm glow of the lighter caught in the palm of his hand. He wondered what Billy's lips against his would feel like. He wondered if he'd like it.

"Here, take it."

Steve took the cigarette, and tried to remember the last time he had smoked. He had tried it once, at a party, in the time Before, but it was only a fuzzy memory.

Billy was watching him intently and Steve hadn't ever felt so exposed. He breathed in the smoke, and tried breathing it out without coughing. It didn't work.

He choked on the smoke, and Billy laughed, his head tipped back towards the night sky.

"Here," Billy reached out for the cigarette, and Steve gave it to him.

"You know those things'll kill you," Steve choked out.

"Yeah," Billy placed the stick in his mouth and talked around it. "But not before it kills you."

Billy was laughing again, and it was so infectious Steve couldn't help but laugh along with him.

They sat there for another hour or two, and Billy learned that Steve was from Hawkins, Indiana, born and raised, and Steve learned that Billy's family had thought about moving there before settling in Chicago. Billy had a step-sister named Max, who was, in Billy's opinion, a little shit, but Steve knew he cared about her. It was all in the way he shook his head and laughed.

It soon got too cold to stay outside, especially when they were only wearing shorts and tees. It may have been august, but there was bound to be a cold snap the closer they got to September.

They sat in the camaro, windows rolled down a little, and finished the last of the beers.

“Steve,” Billy said, and it was the first time Steve had remembered hearing Billy say his actual name.

Steve made a noncommittal sound at the back of his throat, his eyes closed.

“I don’t think I can drive, dude.” Billy was breathless, and Steve looked over at him in the darkness, smiling at him.

“I don’t think I can, either.” Billy smiled back at him.

“I guess we’re fucked, then.”

“I guess we are. Goodnight then, Billy.”

“Goodnight, princess.”

The two boys dissolved into fits of laughter, because they were drunk and sleep-deprived.

Billy reached around into the back, looking for something, and Steve was given the view of his chest, barely inches from his face. He gasped quietly, and Billy tensed. It was such a small movement, Steve almost didn't register it, and put it down to them being drunk.

Billy threw something heavy and scratchy at him. Steve took it. It was a wool blanket. He had also grabbed his leather jacket, and draped it over himself.

Steve wondered briefly why he would have a blanket stored in his car before he remembered, and the thought made his spirits drop.

His eyes were half closed adjusting the blanket over himself, and Steve leaned against the window, listening to the even and steady breathing coming from next to him.

Steve had never felt so at peace, hadn't for a long time. It was easy for him to just fall away into sleep.

...

Billy awoke with a start, and stayed very still, trying to figure out where he was. Oh, he was at the hill. Billy leaned back into the side of his car, and sat there, just staring off into space.

There was breathing, slow and steady, loud in the quiet stillness of the morning. Billy let his eyes drift over the dashboard to the boy sleeping in the passenger seat.

Steve was huddled under his army green blanket, the blanket pulled up over his mouth. He was leaning against the window, eyes closed and face so peaceful, Billy felt a pang in his stomach.

His eyes were pulled back to the windshield. The light was pouring over the Chicago skyline, and all kinds of birds were singing. There was fog over the city and condensation had formed on the glass during the night.

Billy hadn't felt so at peace in a long time. He wasn't angry, far from it. All he could do was take in the scenery and the boy sitting next to him.

Billy wanted this moment to last forever.

Steve stirred next to him, and Billy watched as Steve opened his eyes, staring blearily out the window, and then over to Billy.

He blinked in recognition, slowly, and Billy felt another pang in his stomach. He was ok with that, he couldn't help but feel it so intimately, and he liked the feeling.

They were quiet for a while, slowly gathering their bearings. Steve took the blanket off him, rubbed his face and stretched, letting out

little breathy groans while doing so. Steve's shirt slid up as he stretched his arms above and back behind his head, and Billy glanced down to see a sliver of pale skin just above his gym shorts.

Fuck. Billy's mouth watered.

Steve sighed long and slow, and looked over to Billy once he was settled in his seat.

"Hi." Steve whispered.

Billy felt a smile spread across his face involuntarily, and whispered, "Hi back."

"I'm starving." Steve shivered and pulled the blanket up back over his legs.

"Yeah, me too," Billy lied. Well, not really. He was starving, but for something a little different than what he thought Steve meant. "Know any good places to eat?"

Steve laughed quietly, and looked over to Billy with a sleepy smile. "Think I might know a place."

"Then what are we waiting for?" Billy said.

He turned on the engine and the car rumbled to life, the purr almost overpowering in the silence that had come before. Billy pulled off the hill and back onto the main road, and they slowly made their way back into the city.

Notes for the Chapter:

This was a lot of fun to write at 2 in the morning.

Love that sleepy drunk feel.

The song used in this is Home Sweet Home - Motley
Crüe